THE

MONTHLY JOURNAL.

VOL. IV.] BOSTON, NOVEMBER, 1863. [No. 11.

OPTIMISM.

AN ESSAY READ AT SPRINGFIELD CONVENTION, OCTOBER, 1863,

BY JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE.

I HAVE been requested to write an essay on Optimism, by way of introducing a discussion of that subject. I shall consequently treat the question suggestively, rather than judicially. I shall try to open it, rather than to settle it. I shall endeavor to provoke denial, rather than assent. If, therefore, I seem to be extravagant and one-sided in any statement, let it be understood that I welcome opposition and contradiction; and shall be better pleased, the better I am confuted.

Optimism is of two kinds, speculative and practical. To discuss the speculative question, will not, I think, be of any great interest; and I shall therefore pass it over very briefly, though this is the form in which the question has received the most attention.

Speculative or philosophic optimism consists in maintaining that this world is the best of all possible worlds. Plato in ancient times, and Leibnitz in modern times, are the chief defenders of this thesis. It follows indeed, neces-

sarily, from the idea of a perfect God; for, if the Creator is perfect, his creation must also be perfect. The character of the workman appears in his work. If we find any imperfection in the creation, it argues an imperfection in the creative act; that is, an imperfection in God. This imperfection must lie either in the divine intellect, will, or love. If his love is perfect love, he must desire a perfect world; if his intelligence is perfect, he must know how to make a perfect world; if his power is perfect, he must be able to make a perfect world.

Of course, this thesis does not intend that the earth, or solar system, is the most perfect of all earths or of all solar systems; for, to make such an assertion, we must be acquainted with them all, and able to compare them with each other. The proposition regards the universe; and means that the universe, taken as a whole, is the best of all possible universes. It is the universe to which Plato refers in his "Timæus," when he says, "The Eternal Deity, causing a circle to revolve in a circle, established the world as one substantive, solitary object, self-sufficient through its own excellence; requiring nothing external, but sufficient for itself. So he produced the universe, a blessed God," . . . "a visible animal, the greatest, best, and most perfect; the one, only-begotten universe." The word used by the Greeks for the universe, Κοσμος, indicates this optimistic faith: it signifies a beautiful order. The Latin word *mundus*, meaning originally the ornaments and attire of woman, is transferred to the universe as the ornamental attire of the Deity, — "weaving for God the garment which we see him by." The English and German term *Welt* or *world* refers rather to the circular motion of the universe, and does not contain the optimistic faith, — a faith which has always belonged more to the Hellenic and Latin races than to the Teutons.

If this speculative optimism, which declares that this universe is the best of all possible universes, can be easily demonstrated by starting from the infinite perfection of God, it is also true, that the opposite doctrine, called pessimism, can be also demonstrated with much show of logic, if we start from what we see of the universe in the finite which surrounds us. Arthur Schopenhauer, the great modern pessimist, argues that this world is really the worst possible world, and thinks that he has demonstrated it, thus: Wherever we look, we see, in nature and in man, that the slightest additional excess, deficiency, or disorder, that is, that the slightest additional evil, would destroy the universe, and make its existence impossible. In outward nature, let there be a little more water, and the earth would be drowned; a little more heat, and it would be parched; a little more cold, and it would be frozen: let the earthquake and hurricane and lightning be ever so little in excess of what they are, and the crust of the earth would be broken up, and man precipitated into the abyss of fire below; or the constitution of the air destroyed, and it would become incapable of supporting life. And so, if man had a little more evil in his blood, a little more selfishness or wilfulness or passion; and society would be impossible. Consequently, if the earth could not exist at all, supposing the slightest addition of evil, it follows that it is the worst world capable of existence; that is, the worst possible world.

This is perhaps enough to say in regard to the speculative question. The practical optimism is different. It consists in maintaining that things are as good as they can be; that all things are really for the best: whatever is, is right. In history, it maintains that all the great events which have occurred have been inevitable, and have taken place according to the working of laws, the general result

of which has been for the best. The results of the battles of Marathon and Platæa were inevitable; and so were those of Pharsalia and Syracuse. When Athens conquered or was conquered, it was equally for the best. It was best that Napoleon should win the battle of Austerlitz, and be defeated at Waterloo. It was best that we should have been defeated at Bull Run, and also best that we should be conquerors at Gettysburg and Vicksburg. The science of optimism considers that every thing is in a state of progressive development; the earth growing out of a nebula, and man coming forth from an ape. In morals, it sees no essential difference between the good and bad man, each being the best in their different ways. It teaches, with Mr. Emerson, that men in the brothel or on the scaffold are on their way upward; and that all vice and crime are to be regarded as the diseases incident to growth, like measles and whooping-cough. Finally, in religion, optimism teaches that every thing is coming out right for everybody; that all men are to be saved at last, and each is being saved now just about as fast as is good for him; that our natural tendency is upward, not downward; and that even fallen angels, and devils, may say (as Milton makes them say),—

> "By our proper motion, we ascend
> Up to our native seats: descent and fall
> To us is adverse."

In other words, that, if men are only let alone, they will fall up into heaven by a certain specific levity.

Now, I do not believe this doctrine at all; certainly not in the extreme way in which we hear it often stated. I do not believe that every one is on his way upward. I think that some are on their way downward. I do not believe that we fall up. I think we must struggle up, and

fight hard, and take life very earnestly. I do not believe that all things in history have been about right. I think there have been times in history when a different course taken by a single man would have altered the whole tendency of things, and have put back or put forward civilization for a thousand years. I believe that God gives great power to human freedom, and allows men to take their time about doing his will. If, for example, Charles the Fifth had resolved to give toleration in religion to his vast empire, he would have saved the world from the terrible wars of religion in the seventeenth century; he would have prevented the fierce antagonisms and extremes into which Catholics and Protestants ran; he would have spared the world the Bartholomew Massacre in France, the Alva massacres in the Low Countries, the Tilly massacres in Germany; and would have advanced the cause of Christian civilization by several centuries. There may have been a man in 1850, who, if he had given his great authority and influence for resistance to the slave-power, instead of concession to it, might have prevented secession and this civil war, and prepared the way for a peaceful solution of this slavery problem. I may be mistaken in my illustrations: I merely mean them as illustrations. My belief is, that man is only on his way upward when his soul is riveted to the everlasting laws of God's moral government. "All things work together for good to those who love God," — to those who love justice more than expediency, truth more than success, moral goodness more than outward plausibility, the praise of God more than the praise of man. I do not believe in what Leibnitz calls the "lazy argument," — *la raison paresseuse*, — which is satisfied with things as they are, and does not fight against evil, or struggle vehemently for good. From God's point of view, slavery may be doing good to mankind. The angels

may see something good coming out of secession and rebellion; but our business is, not to philosophize on the good that is to come hereafter, but to fight the wrong which is by our side to-day. "In this great theatre of the world," says Lord Bacon, "it is permitted only to God and the angels to be spectators: men must be actors." It is very easy to say that things are going on about as fast as is best; that truth is mighty, and will prevail; and so forth. But this sort of argument is the lazy argument. It destroys all heroism, all self-denial, all generous endeavor, all grand martyrdom. It is a bad thing, such optimism.

Is there really such a thing as evil, or is there not? If there is, then all things are not for the best. Optimism must deny that evil is really evil: it must believe it to be good in disguise. Thus a lie is truth in disguise; meanness is generosity in disguise; selfishness is another form of love; hatred, a manner of being affectionate; cowardice, inverted courage; cruelty, *quasi* benevolence. But "woe to those who put evil for good, and good for evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter;" who confound the eternal distinctions between right and wrong, and deny the moral law which is the strong foundation of the universe!

If there is any evil in the world; if the prick of a pin, or the sting of a mosquito, is bad, — then optimism is false. Good may come out of evil, I know; but it comes out of evil by making us hate evil and oppose it. The best thing that evil does for us is to make us abhor it. Where sin has abounded, there grace may more abound; but grace does its work by teaching us to hate the sin, and flee from it.

Men say that "truth is mighty, and will prevail;" but if they say this, and then sit down and wait for it to pre-

vail, it waits too. Truth is only mighty as it makes men mighty. Truth is not mighty when its friends are lazy and cowardly, and its foes active and bold.

That every thing is about as good as it can be under present circumstances, and that every thing that happens is about the best thing that could happen, and that every man is going to heaven about as directly as his nature allows, may seem a comfortable doctrine; but it is, in fact, the most fatal to all real peace here. For the peace of man's soul is not passive, but active: it is the result of struggle, of war, of fierce antagonisms of good and evil. I had rather believe, with Zoroaster, in two set against two everywhere, — evil principles everywhere at war with good, Ormuzd and his Amschaspands warring evermore against Ahriman and his Amschaspands, — light against darkness, — than to take up with such a lazy, self-satisfied philosophy as this. I had rather be "a Pagan suckled in a creed outworn," or an Orthodox believer in the devil and hell (if I might only explain the eternity of hell as something outside of time), than to ignore the great and everlasting antagonisms of good and evil. The goodness of God is arraigned by this Pantheistic optimism. I can understand outward evil, pain, misery, if I see that it is sent to save us from deeper and blacker moral and spiritual evil. But, if we are all drifting along quietly toward heaven, I cannot see why God should allow all the sufferings, wars, and wrongs which torment in this world. If we are going upwards together by some omnipotent law, it is cruel in God to allow a single child to be stung by a single mosquito. But I can bless God with all my heart for bereavement and trial and outward anguish, if sin is a great and awful reality, and to save us from it by arming us to the great battle of Armageddon is the object of all these outward pains.

I am ready to explain away all other evil; but I cannot explain away moral and spiritual evil. That remains something real; positive, not negative; an eternal hostility to good; the everlasting antagonism of darkness to light; out of which antagonism all life and progress are born. Explain it away, and life ceases; all things fall flat into a tame monotony. Man becomes an Epicurean, satisfied to let all things go, and aiming at quiet as the best thing in the universe.

For myself, I believe in the Devil. I see, in this world, men who, whatever good may be in them, are exercising their whole moral force in the direction of evil, and enveloping multitudes around them by their noxious influence. They are Tempters, Satans, Devils, for the time being; and we must say to them, however amiable they may be in many things, as Jesus said to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Take the men who have used for years their total influence to hurry the Southern States and people into this great Rebellion for the support and extension of slavery: have they not been Satans? — Yancey, Jefferson Davis, Toombs, Floyd, Mason, Slidell. Take the men at the North who have been for years teaching that the negro is only fit to be a slave; who have been teaching the poor and ignorant whites to despise and hate their brother whom God clothed in a dark suit; take the newspapers in Boston and New York who have been systematically sneering at every humane and philanthropic effort to raise the black races; who are now, secretly or openly, using all their genius and influence to prevent Jesus from breaking every yoke, and letting the oppressed go free: are such men on their way upward? Are we to regard this as all for the best? As God lives, no! These editors and politicians, these Seymours and Woods and Lunts and Brookses and Pierces and Buchanans, are

the Satans and Devils of our day, and are using all their power to help rebels at the South and traitors at the North to resist the coming of the Son of man. These are the men, who, when God is evidently shaking the heavens and earth in order to establish a new heaven and earth in which shall dwell righteousness, cabal and struggle and conspire and contrive, and band together all that is base, mean, selfish, and evil, in order, if possible, to keep back the progress of justice and humanity. I cannot believe in optimism while such men continue to exist; and if men with such baleful influence are allowed by God to exist here, and conquer for a time, as they often do, the followers of Christ, and crucify the Son of man afresh in each age, as their prototypes did in Judæa, then I do not know why there may not be also spiritual powers permitted to work similar evil in the higher politics of the universe, — thrones and principalities and powers; and perhaps one mightier than all the rest, whose dark shadow of evil influence falls across the stellar system, tending, in whatever worlds it may touch, to increase selfishness, doubt, and despair. Astronomers account for the cold seasons which sometimes occur, by saying that the whole solar system has drifted into a cool region of the universe. Why not account for some horrible periods in human history, by admitting that the cold influence of some higher spiritual being may for a time have fallen on the minds and hearts of mankind? I see nothing unphilosophical or incredible in that.

I ought, however, here to make this limitation. I do not believe in any spirit being absolutely evil. When Jesus called Peter Satan, and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" Peter was not wholly evil. Peter was, on the whole, a good man. But Peter was a Satan *then*, because he had put his will in a false direction. He had set him-

existed. Hell is only evil in comparison with heaven; but, in itself, it is good. Existence is, always and everywhere, better than non-existence. The most sinful, being good, so far as they have positive being, have a place and work in the lowest circles of the universe; and are only inferior in office, not in nature, to the angels. God does not hate them, but loves them; for the original act of creative love, which brought all creatures into existence, is a continued and eternal act, in which even Satan is included.

With this view of Satan as a being not absolutely evil, but misled and misleading, I see nothing unphilosophical in the belief.

But, while making these concessions to optimism, we must not forget that our Saviour emphasized, in the most earnest manner, the evil of evil. He taught, indeed, that God's providence extends to all his creatures; that his sun shines on the evil and the good; and that he loves and pities his wandering and prodigal child with an especial depth and tenderness of affection. But in one text he says of Judas, that though it was ordained that the Son of man should go as it is written, yet woe to him by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It were good for the Son of man that that man had not been born. He does not think it a good thing that Jerusalem should reject him. He weeps over Jerusalem, and says, "If thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace!" The agonizing conflict of Jesus with the powers of darkness; his cry on the cross, "My God, my God!"—do not savor of that kind of optimism which teaches that every thing that happens is about right.

The deeper we go into experience, the more we find that life is thus a warfare, and all progress is born out of struggle. It is no wonder that one of the most ancient religions should have made this dualism its fundamental

principle. The great religion of Zoroaster — perhaps the noblest of all the religions before Christianity — declares that God, the Infinite, set light and darkness, good and evil, to contend together, and that the life of the good is warfare. Christianity accepts this saying, and declares that we wrestle here not with flesh and blood; that we are soldiers; and tells us to fight the good fight of faith.

The deepest insight of truth leads us to see antagonistic truths in all things opposing laws everywhere. But virtue consists in the equipoise and harmony of opposing virtues. It teaches us to be cautious, and yet courageous; to be truthful, and yet not to let our truth be harsh and cruel and cold; to be kind, and yet not to let our kindness be concession and falsehood and treason to the great law of Right; to be harmless as doves, and yet wise as serpents; to be generous in our aims, yet prudent in our measures; to be severe in judging ourselves, and yet hopeful, trusting in God; to be generous in judging others, and yet faithful to them, and frank in telling them the truth, even though it may offend them. All virtue is thus the harmony of opposites; and no virtue is noble which does not try, at least, to realize this harmony.

And, in religion, the deepest and highest experience of all is that which combines the sense of responsibility and sense of dependence, law and love, duty and prayer, faith and works, morality and piety.

It is because the Bible states everywhere this warfare as the duty of man, that it retains such a hold on the conscience of the race. Other books are popular in one age, and forgotten and superseded in the next; but the Bible, the book for all ages, is like a great and magnificent vessel, which goes out to sea, ready for storms or for calms, equipped in every part. It is fit for peace, capable of war; on sunny days, and with favoring winds, clothed like

a bird with its white extended wings, the beauty of the sea; in rough weather gathering them in, and with closed hatches riding buoyant on the enormous surges, washed from stem to stern with every wave; but rising out of the black sea, and holding on its way, till it gain its appointed harbor beyond the wide-heaving and tormented main.

The only real peace we can have is when we believe in evil, and prepare ourselves for war against it. Contented optimism makes men more wretched than any thing else.

Theoretically, there may be difficulties in this question; but, practically, there are none. Whatever may be said of physical and natural evil, sin must always be bad, — never can become good. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world." Good comes out of sin, every day; but sin itself is not, and never can be, good. The poet says truly, —

> "Ill that God blesses is our good,
> And unblest good is ill;
> And all is right which seems most wrong,
> If it be his sweet will."

This is the optimism in which I do believe, — that all things work together for good to those who love God and hate evil. To them, all events are, indeed, providential; to others, accidental. To their eyes, God reigns, and the Devil is sure to be beaten at last; to others, evil and good are waging war with equal fortunes. To them, hell is only purgatory, to purify and redeem; to others, it is hopeless, and only black despair. To those who do not believe in God, and love him, this world is a hell already, and the earth is a fortuitous concourse of circling atoms; life, an aimless circuit round and round, tending nowhere; and the Devil, the real lord and master of the world. But the man of faith is necessarily an optimist in this better

sense. So the true optimism does not ignore or neglect evil, or consider it as only negative; but admits it, and fights against it, but in faith that it is to be conquered at last. The Church, in the past, has been too much afraid of evil, has shrunk away from it too much, and considered itself only as an ark to save a few from the deluge. It is, hereafter, to come forth more heartily, and battle more courageously against wrong; speaking the truth in love, and fighting the good fight of faith: and, in this great war, Christianity, forgetting its separate creeds and rituals, will be like a great army, with all arms — cavalry, infantry, artillery — going out under the great Captain to contend against all sin and evil.

THE AUTUMNAL CONVENTION.

ORDER OF EXERCISES.

Tuesday, Oct. 13, 1863. — 7½, P.M., Sermon by Rev. Edward E. Hale, of Boston.

Wednesday. — 8, A.M., Conference and Prayer Meeting. 9, A.M., Essay by Charles E. Norton, Esq., — "American Ideas applied to Religion and Politics;" followed by discussion till 1½, P.M. 6, P.M., Sermon by Rev. Octavius B. Frothingham, of New York. 8, P.M., Collation in City Hall.

Thursday. — 8, A.M., Conference and Prayer Meeting. 9, A.M., Essay on "Optimism," by Rev. James Freeman Clarke, of Boston; followed by discussion.

For twenty-two consecutive Octobers, the members of our Unitarian communion have assembled in convention at some point, more or less accessible, extending from Montreal on the north and east, to Baltimore on the south, and Syracuse on the west. In this period, they have assembled in seventeen distinct towns or cities.

They last convened in Springfield, Mass., Tuesday, Oct. 13, 1863.

The gathering was much the largest on record; the delegates from abroad numbering not fewer than seven hundred, from about one hundred and fifty distinct parishes, located in one hundred and five towns and cities, from Maine to Kentucky, and including about ninety ministers, settled and unsettled, embracing many of those most widely known in and out of the denomination, and most highly respected.

This unusual attendance, though doubtless accountable for in part by the remarkably successful Convention held last year in Brooklyn, is even more largely attributable to causes more intrinsic and permanent. It is undeniable, that, owing to recent events, the body occupies, denominationally, a position before the public of much greater prominence and repute than ever before. It has suddenly been discovered to our credit, that, as a body, we have been always in the van of every reformatory or philanthropic movement; and, now, *that* radicalism, — in matters at least of social science, — which has hitherto been denounced as baneful and disastrous, forms our special claim to earnest and respectful consideration.

The natural effect of this prominence and consideration has been to generate among ourselves an increase of hitherto deficient *esprit du corps*, one of the first and most obvious fruits of which was observable in the attendance at Springfield.

All the services of the Convention took place in the Unitarian Church; Rev. Francis Tiffany, pastor. The commodious edifice was completely filled at every meeting.

THE OFFICERS OF THE CONVENTION,

elected on Wednesday morning, were, —

President. — Rev. Dr. HOSMER, of Buffalo.

Vice-Presidents. — Rev. Dr. FARLEY, of Brooklyn; JUDGE CHAPIN, of Worcester.

Secretaries. — Rev. GEORGE M. RICE, of Westford; Rev. C. S. LOCKE, of West Dedham.

The press was represented in unusual force. Besides representatives of the two denominational papers, special reports of considerable fulness were prepared for the "Springfield Republican," the "New-York Evening Post," "Boston Daily Advertiser," and "Boston Journal," by gentlemen from each of these papers. From these various reports, in part, the subjoined record of the Convention is compiled; and, in making this acknowledgment of indebtedness, it is but just to bear testimony to the general fidelity and accuracy of the several reports and abstracts referred to.

THE SERMONS

were delivered by Rev. E. E. Hale, of Boston, and Rev. O. B. Frothingham, of New York; the former on Tuesday evening, the latter on Wednesday evening. Though noticeably dissimilar in thought and style, both discourses were of marked originality and power, and were listened to with the deepest interest.

Mr. HALE'S DISCOURSE was from the text in Matt. xii. 32: —

"Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him."

The speaker said the central truth of personal religion is the doctrine of the Holy Spirit: it is, therefore, the central doctrine

of theology. This doctrine now commands, as never before, the assent and proclamation of every squadron and battalion of the Christian Church. The scholarship of the Church has always inclined to rest in written forms; but the life of Christianity breaks through these, and plants itself upon the vital doctrine of the presence of God with and in his people as the sole essential condition of truth and godliness. Luther re-asserted this doctrine, when he proclaimed individual justification by faith; and the Church, in denying and denouncing him, denied the essential doctrine of her own creed. Protestantism, in its worship of the living scripture, forgot that God is the ever-living; so that it came to need the Moravians, Zinzendorf, Fox, Swedenborg, Whitefield, the Wesleys, and Channing, to re-assert the truth, that the Holy Spirit is with the people of God, leading them into all truth. "The word is nigh thee, in thy heart and in thy mouth." It is clear that this must have been the doctrine of personal piety in all ages. Whoever prays, believes that God is with him, and hears and answers him.

At this day, the presence of God with his people is generally accepted as the central idea of theology and a religious life. The doctrine of the Holy Spirit has asserted itself, and won universal assent. In this steady advance of theology, it is evident there must come a reconstruction of theological systems. The sentiment of conservatism gives rise to a fear, that the Saviour, the written gospel, are superseded by every new revelation of the living God; as if, in the growth of a spiritual faith, there is a proportionate decline of evangelical religion.

The preacher controverted this idea, and proceeded to show that this triumph of the Holy Spirit is what Christ labored, hoped, and prayed for. It is the steady drift of his whole system. In the text, which is no isolated passage, but the expression and summing-up of the Saviour's whole teachings, he declares his indifference to what men thought of himself, if they gave allegiance to the Infinite God. The first brother of our brotherhood lived and died for this great idea, which is just beginning to dawn in its fulness on the world. Never has this gospel so triumphed as in the assent of the churches to the simplest and broadest statement of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

Our Lord's mission is divided into two marked periods, — the period of failure and the period of success. He failed in all his attempts to interest the rulers and leaders of the Jews in his doctrine. He then appealed to the people, and Christianity became democratic. The appeal to the people was successful, and the world was saved. If Christ had wished to found a Christology instead of a theology, we should discover it in his teachings. In the appeals of Christ to the rulers, he waives every personal claim to recognition: it is never himself, but the Father, that is brought forward. His steady effort is to show, not only that his Father has sent him, but that the Father is with him. Turning to his appeals to the people, we find, that, with a single exception (in the case of John in prison), nobody ever asked him his authority. But he always puts forward his divine mission. That the spirit of the Lord is upon him, is his constant theme: it is the Father that does the work. "I cannot help you," he reiterates: "the Holy Ghost alone can help you." And he sends out his disciples, not to proclaim his own advent, but to preach, "The kingdom of God is at hand:" and wherever, since that time, religion has been successfully carried, it has been by preaching the immediate, the absolute presence of God; God *here*, — here *now*.

When he announces his death, it is, "I go away, that the Spirit may come." Thus do the Gospels illustrate the great, almost painful, self-denial expressed in the text. On the broadest scale, his life echoed it: we see it at Zion, at Lebanon, at Calvary. He always forgets himself, that he may assert the present Spirit, the present kingdom. So false is the gloss that supposes that he went about offering himself as the Christ, or talking of himself at all. Like his Father, he leaves it for his works to proclaim him.

Does this seem a bold or old statement? Not till the Holy Spirit speaks to you can you know what your Saviour is, or what he said. Not till the Comforter comes to you, can you know the truth or the joy of the Master or his glory. We twist our wretched metaphors to find out how Christ comes in God, and God in him: never shall we know it till we accept the symbol that he gave. Never, till we are united to Christ

by the Holy Spirit, shall we begin to comprehend the union of the Father with his beloved Son.

Mr. FROTHINGHAM'S SERMON was from the text in 1 Tim. v. 8:—

"If any man provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."

After an analytical introduction, the preacher announced as his theme, "Natural Religion, — its Creed, its Purpose, and its Life."

The text asserts that an infidel is one who does not provide for his own household. Faith must, in that age, have been in a very rudimentary state. The simple-minded apostle says the infidel is he who does not provide for his own household. At that day, indeed, men attached a secondary importance to believing: indeed, their believing grew mainly out of their living.

Christianity is the natural religion of man; and its characteristic doctrine is therefore the brotherhood of humanity. This is what Christ illustrated and consecrated in his life. This gave point to every precept. It was an entirely original faith then, and it is an original faith still. This is the great mystery, — deeper than the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the divinity in man, — that there is a ground of sympathy between man and God. What a mystery it must have been in that age! People then had no conception of a common humanity: a God incarnated in a human soul was then a thing inconceivable. Every enormity was then commonly committed, and the closest ties of kindred did not prevent the grossest cruelties. The barbarism of those times was illustrated by many historical instances of fiendish cruelty. After the life of Herod, the life of Jesus must have been the mystery of the world; and it is not strange that the disciples of Jesus should have held, that to believe in that was the great test of fidelity to the Master.

As late as the fifteenth century, infidelity meant unfaithfulness, not unbelief. Not till the seventeenth century did it come to mean unbelief of certain doctrines. How came this change of meaning, — this divorce of faith from life? How

comes it about that Paul's maxim has been so reversed as to read, "He that denies the faith is worse than him that provides not for his own household, — worse than a thief or a robber"? It was because the early Christians suffered for their beliefs. After the age of persecution, life became calm again; but there stand the beliefs, with all the precious sanctities clinging to them, all marked with the blood of martyrdom, and fragrant with the odors of worship. It became a matter of honor to hold to those beliefs, even after their vitality was gone, and men were living upon other beliefs.

Disbelief has been called infidelity, because there has been a time when it was infidelity, when it was disloyalty. When the time has passed, to keep up the distinction is to misuse words. The ring of Saturn is supposed to be the old crust of the planet, thrown off in the process of cooling. The ring was once a part of the star: now it is some thousands of miles away from it, makes no part of it, perhaps embarrasses its motion. So humanity has revolving about it vast beliefs which have been thrown off, all aglow by the spirit of God: they were once a part of our substance, and took up a place in our souls. But our life has been becoming more compact within itself; and now, miles and miles from us, revolve about us those numerous fragments of our former life. If we try to establish the old intimacy, we but waste our time and strength; for the chasm between us and them will constantly widen. This is the confusing fact of our times, — the separation of our beliefs from our daily life. One day in a week, we venerate symbols we do not comprehend, and repeat creeds we do not believe. Sunday is separated from Monday by the diameter of the globe. Sunday we spend with Cyril and Athanasius; Monday, with Ericsson and his works. Sunday is without an object; and Monday, without a subject. Sunday we have no existence, and Monday we have no being. Sunday, no body; and Monday, no soul. Sunday, no earth; and Monday, no heaven. Sunday, no world; and Monday, no God. Our faith is in Jerusalem; our being, in New York.

It does seem sometimes that men must bear the imputation of infidelity in order not to be infidels. Faith means fidelity to

the convictions of the heart: infidelity is unfaithfulness to our sincere convictions. Life must take the initiative; first the inner life, the Christ within. This is the last effort and result of the creative energy. This is the only Holy Spirit we know. What we experience we alone know. We must commune intimately with humanity, or we cannot commune with God. To escape from infidelity in this age is to bring back the old fidelity. The faith in the indwelling God which Jesus spoke of, — this is the natural and human religion. This religion exhausts fidelity: it gives full occupation to all the energies and to all the power of the will. It has a theology, a philosophy, an art, of its own; and it will soon have an architecture of its own. Its notion of faith is fidelity to the soul; of infidelity, unfaithfulness to the soul. There are no such prayers as are breathed from its devotees; there is no such trust as braces the wills of its heroes. To escape from infidelity in this age, one must accept the beliefs of his age. The vital beliefs of our age are beliefs in nature, natural laws, natural science, natural worship. The question we are discussing is vital to the day and the hour. Like the painters of the pre-Raphaelite school, we must first copy literally the facts of life as they are. Having done that, we may give sway to imagination, as did Raphael himself, and attempt to conceive and delineate the forms of the absolute and eternal.

MEETINGS FOR CONFERENCE AND PRAYER

were held Wednesday and Thursday mornings, at eight o'clock. They were well attended, and were generally pervaded by an earnest, serious spirit. They lacked, however, — as our Conference-meetings, both in May and October, are apt to lack, — that freshness and warmth of devotion so noticeable in the morning assemblies of the Western Conference.

From some cause, — probably too great reticence on the part of the more thoughtful speakers, — a considerable portion of time is unprofitably consumed in wandering talk *about* the "deep things of the spirit," or in mere iteration

of undisputed and uninspiring truths; and the hours are consequently less quickening and helpful than they might become, if the exercises were characterized by greater condensation of thought, pervaded with a more vital experience, and of more direct, personal, and practical application.

Doubtless the most stimulative and suggestive exercises of the Convention were —

THE DISCUSSIONS.

The first of these took place on Wednesday morning, and was introduced by the reading of an essay by CHARLES ELIOT NORTON, Esq., of Cambridge, upon "American Ideas applied to Religion and Politics." Mr. Norton said, —

The liberal Christian is a liberal in politics. The man who is an American, not merely by birth, but by confidence in American principles, is necessarily a liberal Christian. The peculiarity of Unitarianism is, that it is not a sect, but a protest against sectarianism. It is the only religious body that represents the genius of republican institutions. The opening Declaration of Independence is not only a political, but a religious doctrine; and nothing but a falling-away from this idea has brought danger upon the State. We owe a debt of gratitude to the fathers for the religious faith which they combined with their politics. But their religion was the thing of a class: they had hardly any conception of the true idea of Christianity, the brotherhood of the race. Now religion and politics have entered upon the same course, and both seek the freedom of the human soul. To the Church universal, all men are equal, and all possess inalienable rights. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of democracy. It is not a gospel for any chosen people: it is the gospel for the poor. "The hour cometh:" it has not yet come. The Christianity of the churches has been a religion of exclusiveness. We reject all ecclesiastical claims to power. The history of the churches is a history of error and usurpation,

of pride in every guise of worldliness; but the Christianity of Christ, which must become the foundation of modern society, — the Christianity of America, — receives all men as brothers, feasts with publicans and sinners, lifts up the lowly, and protects the rights of all men. This is the spirit of Liberal Christianity.

The time is auspicious. Never before did ministers meet together with such confidence in the prevalence of the truth. The war in which we are engaged is a war for the spread of liberal ideas and principles. It is for the suppression of a rebellion equally against law and liberty, for the establishment of a government in antagonism to all rights. Every human right and every American principle is rejected by them. It is the most profoundly moral war ever fought; and this accounts for the pertinacity and confidence with which we fight. We know that our cause must prevail. We are determined to win, in spite of the mistakes of our civil and military leaders.

The effect of the war upon public opinion is remarkable. The separation between politics and morals ought not to exist in a free government; but our history has been one of compromises between right and wrong. We have excepted the black man from our declaration of inalienable human rights. For a time, this arrangement seemed to work well; we grew rich and prosperous: but suddenly, when we expected it not, Justice turned her awful face upon us, and the blow of her avenging sword fell, freeing the slave, and shattering the columns of our fair Commonwealth. The war has made the North antislavery; and the spirit of the nation is at length consistent with its principles; and the whole tone of morals has been deepened and liberalized. Some deep and convincing experience was needed to bring the national doctrine home to the hearts of men. The war has done this. The moral standard of the individual depends upon his religious character ultimately. In the assertion of the supremacy of the moral judgment of the individual, liberal Christians differ from others. It is our duty to protest against the separation of human affairs from religion. We have held, and we now hold more firmly than ever, to the political doctrines on which our Government is founded. We believe in realizing a Christian Commonwealth, in which human

rights shall be more respected and human character more nobly developed than in any previous government. The war has liberalized us, not only in regard to slavery, but in all public interests; and it has created a popular demand for liberal notions in religion. The war has brought religious creeds to a hard test of actual experience, and brought us to deeper and freer thought in regard to the realities of this life and the life to come. Creeds have failed us in this emergency; but the religion that binds man to God, and men to each other, has proved equal to the crisis. The battle-field, the camp, and the hospital have created a freer faith. The Unitarian denomination may not be enlarged by it; but the religious freedom and the higher faith we seek will be extended. Though quickened by the war, the liberal movement is not dependent upon it. It is one of the great evangelical movements of thought. It is marked in England by the disastrous condition of the Church: the old forms of religion have there failed. In France and Germany, the same current is setting forward in the same direction. Everywhere there is movement, and everywhere but here there is disappointment. Here we have a liberty that secures confidence in truth, and avails itself of all the elements of progress. America has led in liberal politics; and it is hers to lead in a free religion. The war brings upon us new obligations and new duties, because it shows the folly of all institutions not founded upon human rights. If Providence is fighting for us, we are called by the fact to higher exertion. Those who seek justice must be the leaders of the world. To make our politics and our institutions more just and Christian, — this is our duty as patriots and Christians. To make America the refuge of the oppressed, and the chosen home of free men, — this is the great work before us.

The essay was received with very decided approbation; and was followed by an earnest and stirring discussion, opened by Rev. Dr. Osgood, of New York. He remarked, —

The beauty of our meetings is that we are all at liberty to be ourselves: Peter may be Peter; and John, John. Each one

speaks from his own stand-point. In Unitarianism to-day, there is this paradox, — we have been radicals in opinion, and conservatives in society. There are still a great many of us very conservative, and our very virtues lean to the wrong side. There is a distinction between religion and politics. The Christian politician takes truth as soon as it is ripe for application, and applies it to government. Channing was always anti-slavery, but not always an abolitionist. He believed in acting within the Constitution. But a new state of things has come. Slavery attacks the law and Constitution; and now we throw aside our conservatism, and assail slavery with the ballot-box and the bayonet. If we are carrying our liberality into politics, it is cheering to know that we are also reaping the fruit. In this we need more aggressive action, more pluck. We have been strong in wrath, in intellect, and in culture, but weak in the faculty and disposition to organize as a power. The weak brethren are too much afraid of losing their individuality. Individuality of thought should produce community of action. There is no danger of knowing too much; but we have been studying every thing without doing much. This martial spirit is regenerating us. We have the material: we wait only the marshalling power. The time has come for the banner of positive Liberal Christianity to be unfurled; and the time has come for us to be a part of the Church militant, as well as the Church meditative; and, when we are the Church militant, the gates of hell shall not prevail against us.

At the conclusion of Dr. Osgood's remarks, the audience testified their approval by hearty applause.

Rev. James Freeman Clarke could say Amen to Brother Osgood. He and Brother Osgood had often diverged, and come together again; and now he thought they were coming together again. He spoke of the inconsistency between our historic position and traditions as a denomination; and our convictions — our convictions have always been progressive, our traditions tame, timid, and conservative. There has been a conflict between the becoming and the proper. It would have been "be-

coming" for us to have taken up the antislavery movement from the beginning; but it was not "proper." He alluded to the coming of the Saviour to John, the rough, uncultivated reformer, to be baptized: and, when the Baptist forbade him, Jesus answered, "Suffer it to be so now; for it is becoming." When S. J. May and Dr. Follen and William Lloyd Garrison were before a Committee of the Massachusetts Legislature to argue against some objectionable enactment hostile to the antislavery movement, the door softly opened, and the thin, pale, spiritual face of Dr. Channing appeared in the doorway; and, as the man entered, he walked quietly across the room, and took his seat, not by the courtly and polished attorney, but sat him down by the side of the rough, earnest, uncompromising iconoclast, — Garrison. He thought it becoming in that hour of trial to take that side, and give his support to the martyrs of liberty. The Unitarian denomination was not then courageous enough to follow. Now the denomination is awakened. Dr. Bellows, by his herculean labors; Dr. Eliot, our dear conservative, who thinks he has been as radical as anybody all his life; Hosmer, who left his peaceful home in the Connecticut Valley to bear the private's gun on his shoulder through the wearisome campaigns; Conant, whose plaintive voice, calling out at night on that dreadful battle-field, "Are there any wounded here?" still rings in our ears; Knapp, and other hearty laborers, — have thoroughly aroused it. See to it that it does not go to sleep again. Now let every thing that can be done to help the human race be done. Don't stop to criticise, but *work*.

Rev. J. H. Heywood, of Louisville, was glad to hear Mr. Conant alluded to. He wished to bear his testimony, not to Rev. Mr. Conant's faithfulness, but to the good results of it. The regiment of which Brother Conant was chaplain was a very hard regiment; and, for a while, he seemed to make no impression upon it. He was discouraged and sad about it. Last week, Mr. Heywood met accidentally in the cars a soldier who had belonged to the Nineteenth Illinois, — Brother Conant's regiment. He asked the man what he thought of his late chaplain. The reply was, "That man we all *revered*. It was

some time before we found him out; but *at last*, at Stone River, we did find him out, and we learned to love and believe in him." Mr. Heywood related the following incident: —

An officer from Louisville led one of Rosecrans's regiments into battle, his superior having been called to other duty. In the advance, this man's son fell by a rebel bullet. The father saw him fall, but could not stop to care for him. Narrating the circumstances to Mr. Heywood, the bereaved father said, with tears in his eyes, "My boy, you know, is gone. I was in temporary command of the regiment; and, as we were pressing on, I saw my boy fall. I could not turn back to help him: so I said to a soldier, 'Look to Johnnie,' and went on; and we did the work we went to do."

"Do you still hold to the idea you expressed when you and I talked over the questions of this war before? Do you feel now as you did then?"

"Certainly: I feel we are doing this work for ourselves and children, and for those who are to come after us. Of course, I am very sad; but the cause is just the same as before, — *only more sacred than ever*."

The speaker gave other interesting personal reminiscences illustrative of the patriotism which abounds in the ranks of the army, and among that much-suffering class, the Union refugees.

Rev. N. A. Staples, of Brooklyn, —

In allusion to the remarks of the first two speakers, thought it was not yet time to discuss the results of the present conflict, or to felicitate ourselves on our success.

He thought the real test and trial of the nation and the individual would come when reconstruction became necessary. We are much in the strait that Noah was, when, as the Rabbis tell, a big giant bestrode the ark, and guided it by his cane whithersoever he would. The geologic history of the denomination is interesting. It is pleasant to look at the fossils; but it is not the great work of the hour. Christians are willing to unite and to work together in these historic days. The man who whets his theological sword for theological warfare now is a very Don Quixote; making an attack upon useful windmills, that ought

to be left to grind corn to feed the hungry. The speaker illustrated, humorously but forcibly, the difference between speculating about things and doing the thing. There is, at present, no interest attaching to a debate upon the causes of the war, or the state of sentiment in the country; but what everybody wants is to hear about, and enter upon, some practical and solid service. Mr. Heywood's experiences were vital; they were the *thing itself*; and therefore reached everybody, interested everybody, and helped everybody. Mr. Scandlin had also had similar experiences: he hoped he would bear his testimony.

Rev. William G. Scandlin, of Grafton, the Association's missionary to the Potomac Army, and now just from Libby Prison, Richmond, responded.

He said he hardly knew how to put himself in position. He considered the question to be, "What is the result of your experience as to the efficacy of our religion to meet the emergencies of the hour?" It had been his privilege, for the last two years, to be taken from the ordinary routine of the ministry, and to be placed amidst the stern realities of the sternest forms of life; and everywhere he had found Liberal Christianity just the thing needed in the field and in prison and hospital; and he believed it to be in keeping with the true national life; that it is the faith demanded by the exigencies of the hour; and that the denomination should take its place as leader in the great work of national renovation. He asked liberal Christians to devote their wealth to the relief of our soldiers, and the dissemination of true religious views, that the gospel may become to them the blessing it has proved to ourselves. Mr. Scandlin gave an interesting account of his capture by the rebels, and his imprisonment at Richmond, with many incidents of camp and prison life.

Rev. James K. Hosmer, of Deerfield (a son of the presiding officer), who has just returned from a term of service as a common soldier in the army, alluded to his experience in the Western Army, and bore witness to the good he had derived from that experience. It had

trimmed, and made to burn brighter, the fire of his faith.

Rev. Dr. STEBBINS, President of the Association, spoke of the importance of the Potomac-Army Mission, and Mr. Scandlin's peculiar fitness for it; and appealed to the Convention whether he should be kept in the field or not. He then briefly sketched Mr. Scandlin's career.

He served in the British navy for ten years; then came to the United States, and shipped on board a whaler for three years more; was on board the United-States ship "Ohio" for a year; and was finally caught in the streets of Boston by the famous Father Taylor, who was so impressed by his appearance, that he dissuaded him from returning to a sea-life, and sent him, instead, to the Theological Seminary at Meadville, Pa., to be educated for the ministry. Mr. Scandlin was afterwards settled as pastor of the Unitarian Society in Grafton, Mass.; and, at the beginning of the war, was offered the colonelcy of a Massachusetts regiment, but declined, preferring to go as a chaplain. The Unitarian Association appointed him the agent, or missionary, of that body, in the Army of the Potomac; and while serving in that capacity, as well as in that of an agent of the Sanitary Commission, he was captured by Stuart's rebel cavalry, after the battle of Gettysburg.

Should such a man be kept at home? Nothing but the want of means to send him will prevent his return to his field of labor. He proposed a collection on the spot, and begged the brethren to give liberally. A collection was taken up, which amounted, with subsequent additions, to $440.61.

Rev. J. F. MOORS, of Greenfield, spoke of the value of the Association tracts, from his own experience as chaplain; also of his own increase of faith in our views of religion, as a result of the same experience.

Rev. C. G. AMES, of Albany, wanted to speak; though he said he really felt ashamed not to be dying for his country.

Perhaps the next best thing was to live for it; for the real base of the army is on the hearts of the people. The army and the Government are always to be gauged by what the people are. The lesson of the hour is, to fight, — fight, and demolish evil, whether it be the evil about us, or the devil inside of us. The last definition of Liberal Christianity is charity: therefore the liberal Christian must fight charitably; and such is all fighting against evil. Truth outside of a man does not become a man: he must take it into himself, and assimilate it. Talking magnificent principles is not enough for us: we must become incarnated with truth, and then truth will constantly go forth from us. We should strive to depopulate the country of false ideas. Get the people right, and then the Government will be right. To increase the virtue and intelligence of the people should be the desire of every Christian. The present rebellion and war is the legitimate ultimation and fruit of a long course of wrong thinking and acting. What the preacher and teacher is to aim to do is to connect principles with conscience. The gospel goes roaring triumphantly on; but the public conscience is not hitched to it: there is no connection, as there should be, between religion and politics, and trade and business of all sorts. All things should be done to the glory of God.

Rev. Dr. HALL, of Providence, noticing, among the collection which had just been made, a one-hundred-dollar bill, thought it the most eloquent speech that had been made for the day. Mr. AMES rejoined, that it depended upon from whom it came: *his* "speech" of a *one-dollar* bill might be as eloquent, considering his means, as the other donor's hundred.

Rev. T. D. HOWARD spoke in behalf of the claims of the Educational Commission. He had labored for some time at Port Royal, and gave a very hopeful view of the important work going on there among the contrabands. They learn with great rapidity; are generally docile and thrifty; and the speaker felt, that, as this Commission is to be one of the prominent labors of the people, they should be ready to render all the aid needed.

Rev. C. NIGHTINGALE, of Groton, followed in a speech of some length, devoted to a discussion of the various Orthodox sects; showing their inherent weaknesses to be an excess of credulity, and a persistent re-affirmation of once-received truths, however false they may have been proved to be.

RESOLUTIONS.

It was one of the exceptional features of this Convention, that it so far overstepped the boundaries of precedent and custom, as to pass, unanimously, a resolution of sympathy with the President of the United States; thus recognizing by formal action the political condition of the country, and expressing as an Association its concern in the great contest now waging between that democracy which lies at the foundations of free institutions, and that oligarchy which aims to supplant free government by a monstrous and an iniquitous system of usurpation and fraud.

The resolution was presented by Rev. Dr. ALONZO HILL, of Worcester; and seconded, in a brief but telling speech, by Rev. Dr. FARLEY, of Brooklyn.

Whereas individuals and ecclesiastical bodies have, at different times and in different places, published opinions on the duties of religious men, that have served to awaken doubt in the minds of the conscientious, and weaken the hands of the Government: therefore —

Resolved by members of the Unitarian body assembled in convention in Springfield, Mass., That we tender to the President of the United States our sympathy and our prayers in this great day of the country's peril and of his responsibility; that while as Christians we are peace-makers, and labor for the spread of peace, we cheerfully offer our own life and that of our children for the perilled life of the nation; that, while we owe allegiance to the constituted authorities at all times, we hold it now, when treason and rebellion are abroad, an especial duty,

both by word and act, to express it; and that, while the privilege of individual freedom is vouchsafed to all, irrespective of color, as a religious right sanctioned by the spirit and letter of the Scriptures, we cannot refrain from the expression of our satisfaction at the proclamation of freedom by the Chief Magistrate to millions now in bondage; and the indulgence of the hope, that the tremendous scenes through which we are passing will result in the liberty and Christian progress of all.

THE COLLATION,

which took place at the City Hall, Wednesday evening, was rather truer to its distinctive character as a *collation* than such occasions usually are.

The hall is very spacious, lofty, and elegant; but, from the architect's utter disregard to the principles of acoustics, the most powerful speaker cannot be heard twenty feet from the platform. Consequently, with the exception of a brief speech of welcome by GEORGE WALKER, Esq., of Springfield, and vigorous but unsuccessful efforts on the part of Rev. Dr. STEBBINS and Rev. Mr. SCANDLIN to overcome the architectural difficulties of the place, no public speaking was attempted.

There was no lack of talking, however; and after the substantial and bountiful repast, provided by the lady hosts, was despatched, the twelve hundred and odd — could, would, or should have been — *listeners* on the floor accomplished for each other an amount of private talking, amply compensating for the failure on the platform.

Thus the faults and failures of the architect of the hall resulted, as "optimism" would have taught, in good, by confirming the democratic element, which has so unmistakably shown itself all through this Convention, and marks so clearly the history and progress of the denomination.

THE SECOND DISCUSSION

(on Thursday morning) was opened by an ESSAY ON OPTIMISM by Rev. JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE, which is published in full in this number of the "Journal."

Rev. C. G. AMES, of Albany, had always believed in the Devil, or something else as good. His belief in the Devil had been very much quickened. But, after all, there is one Power in the universe, which is sufficient to embrace all things in his infinite love; which never lets loose an evil power, without holding the reins. There seems something ludicrous in our going into a committee of the whole on the state of the universe, and suggesting improvements. My creed is this: I do not believe in any uncontrollable forces in God's universe; and there is no evil which he does not mean for some higher good. I think the Devil himself must have an inward conviction, that all his devilishness is somehow made to serve a power grander and better than himself. We must say at last, I think, that all evil is partial good; all discord, harmony not understood; and that God is over all; — that all things work together for good to those who do not love God, as truly as to those who love him; since the best thing that can happen to them is, that they shall suffer the evil, and feel the consequences; and that there are no hell and damnation that are not means of grace and a purifying fire.

Rev. N. A. STAPLES, of Brooklyn, avowed his belief in the optimism that denies any absolute evil, — any evil that has not its remedy. What we want, weak and ignorant as we are, is an antecedent probability which will overarch our life with its bow of promise. There is no result logically from monotheism, which is Christianity, but optimism. There is no escaping the argument from the power, wisdom, and love of God. To say that some great Devil has sprung up to create remediless evil, is to impugn the goodness of God. There can be no perfect results, unless the anterior details were perfect. If we come to

a wheel in Ericsson's machinery that we do not understand, we fall back upon the antecedent probability, and say that Ericsson could not have made a mistake, and the wheel must have an important purpose. So we judge of the evils of this life, which are to us inexplicable. We cannot afford, in any instance, to give up this idea. We do not deny the evil and the sin; but we fall back on the antecedent probability, that there is good in the ultimate result. Give the liberty to sin: it is better that the consequent suffering should rise up to protest against it. When we come to the special facts of human experience, we all become optimists. There is no absolutely right way to get to God. It may be that some of us can only get formed into a sufficient personality to exist at all, except under the hammer of sin. Does the loving parent forsake the child when he needs love most? and is God less to us than an earthly parent to his child? Will God forsake men when they need his care most? It may seem cruel to cut off the branches of a tree; but wait till next year, and it will round out to a noble, perfect dome: and thus we may interpret the great historic mistakes and crimes which seem to put back the progress of civilization. The speaker closed by saying, that, in spite of all the darkness of life, he would still believe that the Infinite Love, without which not a sparrow falls to the ground, would harmonize all these uncertainties; weaving and blending these sharp cries of anguish into an unbroken anthem of praise.

Rev. J. B. GREENE, of Bernardston, insisted that the true point had not been touched. The question is, Is it good for me to sin? not, whether my sin may be the means of good to others. He could have wished that the discussion had taken a more practical range. He spoke of a man he met in prison, who boasted that he had killed a negro. He would not believe that the men who wrote the articles in the Boston "Courier" and "Post" and New-York "Herald," that make men feel that the murder of a negro is no crime, are to be excused on the optimistic theory. He wanted the Convention to go home feeling that the war has broken up the foundations of Orthodoxy, and that now is the time to propagate Liberal

Christianity. The ploughshare of the Lord is turning up the furrows of opinion. The war is making men liberal; but we have got the *Christianizing* yet to do. We have got to become a missionary body in order to accomplish any thing. He spoke of the Sanitary Commission, and said he thought the time might come, when, if a man was asked what church he belonged to, the answer would be, "The Sanitary Commission."

Rev. R. R. SHIPPEN, of Worcester, wished to state the difficulty lying in his own mind. He accepted the doctrines both of the essay, and the reply to it by the brother from Brooklyn: he believed they were in perfect harmony. We accept optimism as an explanation of all that God does, but not as a defence of sin. He could see that the suffering of hell is a beneficent arrangement to turn men away from sin; but he could not see that the sin itself was a good. This preaching that hell is one road to heaven makes the conscience a mere fog. He could not see in a descent to hell an ascent into heaven. We have to learn the great lesson of Christianity, — the millennium will come just when we are ready to welcome it. Evil postpones the consummation of the good. The antecedent probability that we need is that the good is the stronger power, and will finally put down the evil by contest, and not without.

Rev. Dr. HEDGE, of Brookline, had doubted the fitness of the subject under debate for public discussion: first, from fear it was not sufficiently practical; and, second, because it had but one side. The first objection had proved groundless; and Brother Clarke had thrown himself so nobly into the breach as the Devil's advocate, as to obviate the second difficulty. The question is, Is this world the best possible? Optimism says, "Yes." Pessimism says, "No;" and, further, that all existence is evil, and there ought to be no world at all. Optimism says, if not the best possible world now, it will be the best eventually. Leibnitz says, the world is the best as a whole, and to every individual in it. This he believed an error. Individual crimes and sins, from that of Tarquin downwards, may help to make the world better; but they do not help the Tarquins. St.

Paul's saying, that God created one vessel to honor and another to dishonor, had seemed a hard saying; but he began to believe it to be true. God aims not at the greatest possible happiness for each individual, but to illustrate his ideas. God holds human life cheap, compared with the demonstration of truth. We should have faith to believe, that, though we may not triumph, still the divine principle is justified. Heaven will be a place of abnegation of self; not a place to which we are all going, by easy stages, for our own enjoyment. The great fallacy of human beings is, that we are created to be happy. We must strive after heroic lives, not after happy ones. We must banish the idol of happiness to secure the great consummation, — emancipation from self.

The poet Claudian was asked if he believed in the Divine Providence. He replied, he could answer when he saw whether or no Rufinus was hanged. Our convictions in Divine Providence are strengthened very much if we see success. That all will come out right for every one, is a weak doctrine.

Mr. Staples's doctrine was very sweet; but it was too sweet. If there is any heaven, it will not consist in personal felicity and comfort, but in loss and sinking of self. Our theology is infected by this heaven of peace and comfort. Away with it! Study, struggle, labor for heroism, but not for happiness.

Rev. Dr. STEBBINS had something to say twenty minutes ago; but Mr. Shippen and Dr. Hedge had said it all. He could understand the fallacy about happiness being the end of existence, and that pain and suffering might be beneficent; but could not understand the use or necessity of sin. When optimism says that sin itself is a blessing, all man's moral nature revolts from the idea.

Rev. O. B. FROTHINGHAM, of New York, next arose, with the remark, Mr. President, I believe it was fore-ordained from the foundation of the world for me to speak at this moment. I am an optimist, up and down, through and through, mind and body, soul and spirit, speculative and practical: and, if there is any such thing as an impractical optimist, I am an impractica

optimist; and, if there is any other sort of an optimist which any lady or gentleman here present can suggest, I am that also.

I do not believe in evil as a power or a thing. It is only a relation between things: it is limitation, privation, bondage. Moreover, it is evanescent, fleeting, mortal. I am, this moment, a suffering illustration of the evil educed by a false relation. I drank coffee this morning. It was delicious coffee; and delicious coffee is a good thing. Nothing ails that. Brains are good: their delicately organized nerves and fibres are perfect and beautiful. Nothing evil in them. But put coffee and brains into relation with each other, and you have a torturing nervous result, which comes as near pure evil as can be conceived. Some persons not only believe in the fullest existence of the Devil, but they believe only in the Devil.

I do not believe in what is usually understood by freedom of the will. All our wills are surrounded by, included in, held, directed, and controlled by the Infinite Will. In this is great comfort and support. I rejoice that the brutal man's will is chained on natural grounds; the wilful man's will, on moral grounds. It is not a lazy, but an intensely inspiring and active, faith. Who is the busy idle man, always in commotion, running hither and thither, always too much employed to do any thing? It is the man who believes in his own individual necessity in the world; who believes, that, if he is not in Wall or State Street at two o'clock, the world will not go on.

The man who thinks nothing of himself, who knows his own power is but weakness, who goes down with his earnest penetrating thought to the bottom of things, — that man is the powerful man, and holds the lever that can move the world.

The calm, modest, quiet, thoughtful, laborious man, who feels and believes and knows that the Divine Arms surround and the Divine Will includes him and all men, is at once the man of faith and the man of action. The believers in destiny — Alaric, Napoleon — were not idlers. Noisy, bustling England, the nation of tinkers, who is always rushing about among the nations of the world, poking her hands into everybody's business, asserting that they can't get on unless they accept her

little invention, has no principle, no ideas. It does the business, while it subverts the faith, of the world.

That happiness, mere comfortableness, is not the law, is true. Only the wilful man demands that. Destiny believes in the good and noble; and aims at blessedness, which is more than happiness. If the whole is perfect, the particles must be perfect. If some of the steps in the progress are sin, then the sin must be good, since all the steps are necessary. The best world to-day is not the best for to-morrow; but it is the best for to-day. Step by step we reach the heavenly heights.

VOTE OF THANKS.

The discussion having subsided, remarks were made by Rev. Francis Tiffany, expressive of the gratification experienced by the society at Springfield in the present Convention, and explanatory of their inability to extend to their numerous guests all that attention they could have desired.

Rev. Dr. Farley responded warmly, maintaining that no apology was needed; and offered the following resolutions, which were adopted by a rising vote: —

Resolved, That the thanks of the Convention are hereby presented to the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Springfield, and to their Committee, and to our friends in Chicopee also, for the warm-hearted and generous hospitality with which they have received and welcomed to their beautiful city and their Christian homes the pastors and delegates of our various churches here represented; and that we devoutly commend them all, pastor and people, to the exhaustless love and blessing of our heavenly Father.

Resolved, That we recognize with exceeding pleasure and gratitude the fraternal spirit of good-will and Christian courtesy which has prompted so many members of other churches, of different name and polity, in this city, to call to their hospitable embrace many of the members of the Convention, and, by the

domestic hearth, to entertain them as members of the common household of faith.

Resolved, That, with reverent and grateful hearts, we turn our faces homeward with recollections of this delightful season of Christian confidence and sympathy, which, we trust, shall never die out; but which, we pray, shall prompt us to better efforts for the Church of Christ, the welfare of man, the glory of God.

Some discussion ensued relative to the appointment of the Committee for the next Convention; and it was decided to drop one name on the old Committee; adding, in its place, that of Rev. James de Normandie, of Portsmouth, N.H.

The Convention then dissolved.

THE SOCIAL ELEMENT

of the Convention is by no means to be overlooked. So unprecedentedly large an attendance not only exhausted the utmost hospitality of our denominational friends, but drew largely upon the kindness of their neighbors of other communions. This opportunity for a better acquaintance could not but have been advantageous on both sides.

It is impossible that so many intelligent, genial, Christian people should sojourn, under such circumstances, in family intimacy, without giving birth to many new and abiding friendships, and doing something to extend that sentiment of brotherhood, the full realization and acceptation of which will mark the complete establishment of Christ's kingdom.

THE CONCLUSION

may be best stated, perhaps, as being a profound conviction of the utility of "Autumnal Conventions."

It is morally impossible that at least every parish represented at the Convention by its minister should not feel the stimulation of the fresh, earnest, and forcible thought

to which utterance was given on the occasion; and every person in attendance must have participated, to some extent, in the mental and spiritual refreshment dispensed so liberally.

The temper and spirit of the Convention were noticeably harmonious: not a jar or discord was observable, though the elements comprehended every phase of belief and opinion included within our communion.

The tone of the Convention was unmistakably progressive; to which, of course, is due the sharpness, brightness, and force of its exercises.

As a whole, though not absolutely the foremost of our Conventions in all particulars, it has, from various causes, produced an impression exceeding that of any previous meeting, and one certain to insure an attendance next autumn, which, unless some system of accredited delegates is adopted, will compel a general house-opening in such town or city as may be the scene of its exercises.

J. P. W.

OUR CHAPLAINS.

The liberalizing tendency of the war appears in various ways. The mingling of ministers of different denominations on the field as chaplains has tended to do away a vast amount of prejudice formerly existing. We lately saw a very enthusiastic notice of our friend Forman in an Orthodox periodical; and here are two more, — one of Arthur Fuller, from a Methodist paper, the "Zion's Herald;" and the other, of Chaplain Hunting, from the "Independent." We think both notices worth preserving.

The first article is on "Chaplain Fuller," the interesting memoir published by Walker, Wise, and Company: —

"Such thoughts as these, so imperfectly rendered, crowd upon the mind in closing the volume we have just perused, — 'Chaplain Fuller, a Life and Sketch of a New-England Clergyman and Army Chaplain, by Richard F. Fuller.'

"Among our noble martyrs, our heroic patriots fallen upon the field of battle, or stricken down amid the miasmas of the camp, or faded away in the crowded hospital, no name bears a brighter lustre, no story has a deeper pathos or a more glorious inspiration, than Arthur Fuller's. One closes the volume with a grateful sense of personal gain. That such a pure life has passed in our midst, such an ardent soul aspired and realized and performed, cannot be less than a blessed help to any one who follows his course with a spirit in the faintest degree akin.

"How harmoniously are blended in him those hitherto incongruous elements of character, — the zealous minister of Christ; the friendly nurse, bending with all a woman's tenderness above the dying soldiers of the hospital; and the valiant warrior falling on the field of battle, and, 'to do something for his country,' giving all, — ease, health, and life itself!

"With the exception of the early days of boyhood, his own letters tell the impressive story, and in that vivid, eloquent way that seemed to bring his readers in the 'Journal' face to face with the far-away scenes of camp or battle-ground, and make them selfish in their grief, when first that heart-rending message flashed along the wires, telling to all, how, lamented and bewailed by his comrades, Arthur Fuller had fallen, gun in hand, in the streets of Fredericksburg.

"That peculiar energetic vitality of his, that makes your breath quiver and your pulse stand still while you follow his matchless description of the contest between the 'Merrimac' and 'Monitor,' breathes through the simplest letter, and pictures for you so truthfully and strikingly the outlines, that every detail seems to have passed beneath your scrutiny. Almost those missionary labors at Belvidere seem more heroic and

grand than the patiently borne sufferings, the persevering labors of the camp, and the enthusiastic valor, the inspiriting example, the great sacrifice, of the crowning act at Fredericksburg; and yet one succeeds the other naturally and harmoniously. No one, following along the pages the boy early inured to care and grief, and constantly urged onward and upward by the gifted sister, 'the day-star of his boyhood,' marvels as if it were something strange to find the earnest pastor among the discord and horrors of war. His memory were blessed, if only for this, — that in his life the world can behold the noble type of our New-England clergymen. What scoffing voice of baser treason than that of the vilest secessionists has lately reviled and maligned the Yankee minister? We need no other answer, no prouder refutation, than this life of Chaplain Fuller."

The other article to which we referred is from the "Independent" of last week: —

"How Chaplains are treated. — Rev. S. S. Hunting, the worthy pastor of the Unitarian Church at Detroit, accepted the office of chaplain in the army; and, after a faithful discharge of his duties for a few months, was summarily dismissed by the late Brig.-Gen. Welsh, on the false and groundless charge of 'countenancing in his regiment resistance to a lawful order of a superior officer.' The facts were these: Gen. Welsh had given orders, in direct violation of law, for the Twenty-seventh Michigan Regiment to be searched for a slave, and for the slave to be delivered up. There was no resistance to the order; and Mr. Hunting was not with the regiment at the time, but learned the facts afterwards, and wrote an indignant account to Rev. C. C. Ames of Cincinnati. Mr. Ames stated the case to Gen. Burnside, who promised to look after it. Gen. Welsh revenged himself by expelling the chaplain from his regiment. The colonel and other officers of the regiment unite in certifying most fully to the falsity of the charge, and the patriotism and good conduct of the chaplain. The case may serve to illustrate the difficulties which the Government has had to contend against

from the proslavery and rebel sympathies and overbearing brutality of many of the West-Point officers. We are glad that this spirit is getting purged out of the army by the terrible experiences we have had. The 'Detroit Advertiser' speaks of the defence published by Mr. Hunting: —

"'The kidnapping itself was an act of disobedience to the "lawful orders of a superior officer" (to wit, the President of the United States); and, the transaction having been public, Chaplain Hunting was justified in mentioning it in a letter to a friend. The *method* of his dismissal — without any Court of Inquiry, or opportunity of defence, and accompanied with a most brutally worded order — shows a consciousness of weakness on the part of his persecutor. This affair will not damage Mr. Hunting in the least, either among his old friends, or in the denomination which he is so honorably connected with; and his malignant persecutor, Brig.-Gen. Welsh, has gone to a world where he will need that forbearance and mercy to be shown him which he took particular pains to deny to several Michigan officers, because they came from a section where "peculiar sentiments" prevail, where liberty is loved, and religion is regarded.'"

MEETINGS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Oct. 12, 1863. — Present, Messrs. Stebbins, Hedge, Clarke, Brigham, Newell, Barrett, Hinckley, Ware, Sawyer, Norton, Smith, and Fox.

The Committee on Publications reported in favor of granting to the Lapham Institute, at North Scituate, R.I., in response to their application, a copy of each of the publications of the Association; and the report was adopted.

The Committee on New-England Correspondence presented an application for aid from the society in Warwick, Mass.; and, in accordance with their recommendation, an appropriation was made of $50.

The Committee on Aid to Theological Students reported that applications for assistance from the Perkins Fund had been received from two students connected with the Cambridge Divinity School; and they were authorized, should they deem it advisable, after consultation with the Faculty, to grant the sums asked for.

The Army-Mission Committee were instructed to renew the arrangement with Rev. William G. Scandlin, as missionary of the Association to the Army of the Potomac, on substantially the same basis as before, should he find himself able to continue in the work.

The Committee on Western Correspondence presented an application for aid from the society in Lawrence, Kan.; and, in view of their great need of help in consequence of the late rebel raid, an appropriation was made of $200; which it was voted to send to them, with the assurance that they had the hearty sympathy of the Board in this time of trial.

The Special Committee, to whom the subject of pulpit supplies was referred at the last meeting, presented a report, in which the evils of the present system were stated, and which recommended, as the only way of removing them, that the Association assume the responsibility of supplying pulpits, and appoint some person to take charge of that business, who should have a desk at the office of the Association.

After a full discussion of the report, it was voted to appoint the Secretary the agent of the Association for the supply of pulpits; and he was instructed to keep a list of candidates for settlement, and of vacant parishes, and to attend to all applications for supplies.

It was further voted to request the same Committee to arrange a plan for the guidance of the Secretary in this work.

Daniel Denny, Esq., of Dorchester, was unanimously elected a Vice-President of the Association, to fill the vacancy existing in that office; and the Board then adjourned to Monday, Nov. 9.

INTELLIGENCE.

The ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY was held at Springfield, Mass., on the afternoons of Tuesday and Wednesday, Oct. 13 and 14. The following officers were chosen for the ensuing year; the President, Secretary, and Treasurer of the past year having declined a re-election: President, Rev. Alfred P. Putnam of Roxbury; Vice-Presidents, Rev. Eli Fay of Leominster and Mr. J. N. Daniell of Boston; Secretary, Rev. Samuel A. Smith of West Cambridge; Treasurer, Mr. Edwin A. Wadleigh of Boston; Directors, Henry J. Bigelow, M.D., of Newton Corner, Rev. Nathaniel Hall of Dorchester, Mr. M. T. Rice of Boston, Rev. Leonard J. Livermore of Lexington, and Rev. Charles H. Brigham of Taunton.

The ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NORFOLK AND MIDDLESEX SUNDAY-SCHOOL ASSOCIATION was held at South Natick on Thursday, Oct. 8; when the following officers were elected for the coming year: President, Rev. Solon W. Bush of Medfield; Vice-President, Rev. Horatio Alger of South Natick; Secretary, Mr. Elliot Perry of South Natick.

The ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MIDDLESEX SUNDAY-SCHOOL SOCIETY was held at Concord on Wednesday, Oct. 21; when the following officers were elected for the coming year: President, Thomas S. Harlow, Esq., of Medford; Vice-President, Henry J. Bigelow, M.D., of Newton Corner; Secretary, Rev. Leonard J. Livermore of Lexington.

Rev. CHARLES NOYES has resigned the charge of the society in Brighton, Mass., on account of ill health.

Rev. JOSHUA YOUNG, recently pastor of the society in Burlington, Vt., has accepted an invitation to take charge of the Third Parish in Hingham, Mass., for six months, commencing Oct. 1.

Rev. JOHN J. PUTNAM has resigned the charge of the society in Bridgewater, Mass.; the resignation to take effect the 1st of January next.

Rev. ROBERT HASSALL, formerly of Haverhill, Mass., has accepted a call from the society in Keokuk, Io.

Mr. MILTON J. MILLER, a graduate of the Cambridge Divinity School in the class of the present year, has accepted an invitation to take charge of a Liberal Christian society in Troy, O.

Rev. B. F. FANTON, of Union Springs, N.Y., has accepted an invitation to take charge of the society in Fitzwilliam, N.H., for six months.

Rev. NATHANIEL O. CHAFFEE, formerly of Bolton, Mass., has been invited to take charge of a new Liberal Christian society in Princeton, Ill.

Rev. GEORGE S. SHAW has resigned the office of Chaplain of the Missouri State Penitentiary, and accepted an invitation to become Instructor in the House of Refuge at St. Louis, Mo.

NOTICE.

ROOMS OF AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION,
Oct. 14, 1863.

To the Committee of Supply in vacant parishes, —

The Committee of the Executive Board, to whom the subject of the mode of supplying vacant pulpits was referred, desire to make it known, that a list of all candidates will be found with Mr. George W. Fox, Secretary of the Association; and would invite them to make application to him.

JOHN. F. W. WARE,
R. P. STEBBINS, } *Committee.*
WARREN SAWYER,

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

1863.			
Sept. 29.	From	Barton-square Society, Salem, for Monthly Journal, additional	$1.00
Oct. 6.	„	Society in Quincy, for Monthly Journals, additional	2.00
8.	„	Society in Barre, as a donation	38.85
14.	„	a friend in the Arlington-street Society, Boston, as a donation	40.00
20.	„	Rev. Ed. J. Young's Society, Newton Corner, as a donation	105.20
21.	„	Rev. J. F. Lovering, to make himself an annual member	1.00
23.	„	Society in Syracuse, N.Y., as a donation, $25.00 For Monthly Journals, additional . . 15.00	40.00

ARMY FUND.

Oct. 3.	From	a friend	$1.00
6.	„	„ „	2.00
8.	„	the children of Fall-River Sunday School, through Rev. J. F. W. Ware	9.00
„	„	a friend	1.90
10.	„	Atherton Blight, Esq., for Tracts	50.00
12.	„	collection at Hollis-street Church, Boston, Sunday evening, Oct. 11	240.70
14.	„	"a friend of the soldier"	5.00
„	„	a friend	5.00
„	„	Charity Fund of South Parish, Portsmouth, N.H.	30.00
16.	„	collection at Autumnal Convention, Springfield, Oct. 14*	440.61
„	„	a friend in the Arlington-street Society, Boston, towards support of Rev. William G. Scandlin	40.00
19.	„	Rev. J. F. W. Ware's Society, Cambridgeport	131.62
„	„	friends in Springfield, through Rev. J. F. W. Ware	17.00
20.	„	a friend, through Rev. J. F. W. Ware	50.00
„	„	L. S. G.	30.00
22.	„	a friend	2.00
28.	„	friends, through Rev. J. F. W. Ware	360.00

FOR REV. JOHN S. BROWN, LAWRENCE, KAN.

The Secretary has received and forwarded the following sums: —

From	a friend in the Arlington-street Society, Boston	$20.00
„	Charity Fund of South Parish, Portsmouth, N.H.	25.00
„	a friend	5.00
„	„ „	10.00
„	„ „	2.00

* Through a mistake in counting, the amount collected at the church was announced as $444.82, instead of $429.61.